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# The role of European national journals in education

Peter Mills, Adam Timmis, Kurt Huber, Hugo Ector, Patrizio Lancellotti, Izet Masic, Mario Ivanusa, Loizos Antoniadis, Michael Aschermann, Alexandras Laucevicius, Pirjo Mustonen, Jean-Yves Artigou, Panos Vardas, Christodoulos Stefanadis, Massimo Chiarello, Leonardo Bolognese, Guiseppe Ambrosio, Ernst E van der Wall, Piotr Kułakowski, Fausto J Pinto, Eduard Apetrei, Rafael G Oganov, Gabriel Kamensky, Thomas F Lüscher, René Lerch, Habib Haouala, Vedat Sansoy, Valentin Shumakov, Carlos Daniel Tajer,\* Chu-Pak Lau,\* Manlio Márquez,\* Rungroj Kittayaphong,\* Kaduo Arai,\* Fernando Alfonso

The Editors' Network of the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) defined its mission in the statement published across the national cardiac journals of Europe in 2008.<sup>1</sup> The network is now considering ways in which their publications can have a broader influence in the field of post-graduate education.

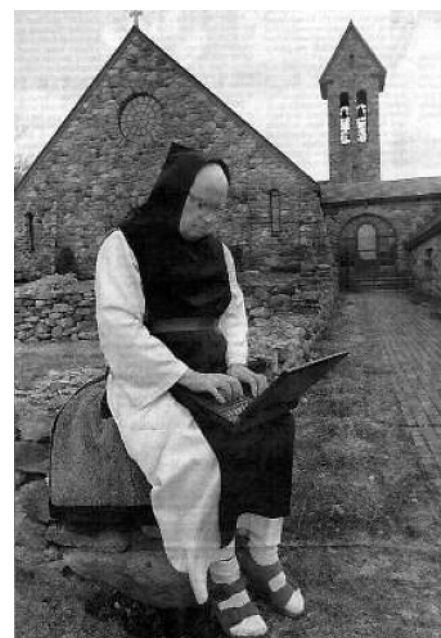
The need for cardiologists to continue to learn throughout their professional life will remain essential. Indeed recognition of the need for postgraduate education was highlighted by Hippocrates long before it was espoused by the medication educationalists and public relations departments. "*Ars longa, vita brevis*" is the Latin translation of Hippocrates' recognition that for doctors the need to continue learning the art of medicine lasts for all their professional life. In mediaeval times, the foundation of modern day ethical medical practice was laid within the heart of the universities; the long-term future of the medical profession was founded in the concept of doctors as men, and women, of learning and knowledge, rather than the purveyors of non-scientific based remedies.

So how does the modern day editor of a national cardiology journal, crouched over

his computer screen, relate to his mediaeval predecessor, the Abbot in charge of the university library selecting the books for scholarly enterprise? The most obvious difference, of course, is that the internet provides modern day authors with easy access to the editor and, consequently, the editor is obliged to make judgments on a much larger number of manuscripts than his predecessor would have been asked to do (fig 1). The academic effort, however, is potentially very valuable, allowing the editor to accumulate a current wisdom of which writers combine both the knowledge of cardiovascular medicine, with the style with which to communicate that knowledge, in an authoritative way to doctors who wish to learn.

What are the characteristics of doctors who wish to learn? As adults, they prefer a self-directed approach, in which they identify their own learning needs, formulate learning objectives, identify resources to achieve these objectives and evaluate their own learning.<sup>2</sup> Medical journals provide a ready resource for meeting the aims of self-directed learning, particularly through their commentary and review articles, but the value of the resource is critically dependent on the quality of the content, which in turn depends on three factors:

- **Subject selection.** Ideally this should be curriculum-based, the core curriculum



of the ESC intending to provide a framework for the continuing medical education (CME) of the general European cardiologist. Both mainstream and more peripheral subject matter are required for comprehensive educational coverage, and so there will be a need for updates, particularly in areas where new discoveries are proceeding most rapidly.

- **Author selection.** Editors are in an unrivalled position to select from currently active authors, those best able to educate others based on their subspecialty expertise and writing skills. Clear presentation must be coupled with the intellectual rigor to back up assertions with evidence derived from critical appraisal of the relevant literature.
- **Presentation.** This should be designed to help stimulate the reader, using highly structured content, relevant illustrations, summary box displays and annotated references that allow the reader to refer back to source material.

Adults who wish to learn, however, require more of medical journals than high-quality commentary and review articles. They also require educational feedback provided by accrediting organisations in order to consolidate their learning and acquire the CME credits that in many countries are becoming an essential requirement for practising doctors. The European Board for Accreditation in Cardiology (EBAC), for example, requires that cardiologists earn a

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## Featured editorial

## Box 1 Summary EBAC criteria for accreditation of CME articles

- ▶ Internationally recognised authors
- ▶ Disclosure of conflicts of interest
- ▶ No advertising within article
- ▶ Provision of objective evaluation instrument (multiple choice questionnaires)
- ▶ Web-based system for provision of CME certificate if  $\geq 60\%$  of questions are answered correctly

minimum of 250 CME credits over a period of 5 years, 125 of which must be "external CMEs" from formally planned external activities, including educational articles.<sup>3</sup> Box 1 summarises the EBAC accreditation policy for CME articles and includes a requirement for "an objective evaluation instrument", recommending the use of a multiple choice questionnaire made available on-line. Articles of ~3500 words and six multiple choice questionnaires are considered equivalent to 1 hour of educational activity and provide one CME credit.

Nearly all the national cardiac journals of Europe carry high-quality review articles<sup>4-7</sup> (box 2). *Heart*, the UK-based international cardiac journal, has been a leader in the field of journal-based education for 10 years,<sup>8</sup> and currently accounts for >95% of educational articles attracting CME credits on the EBAC website. Its educational section runs semiautonomously within the journal under the direction of a dedicated editor and a team of specialist advisors. Education in *Heart* is available for free access via the *Heart* and ESC websites<sup>9-10</sup> and its articles are among the most highly accessed of all the journal's papers, consistently appearing in the top 10 web downloads during 2008.<sup>11-15</sup> High-quality educational content with provision of local CME credits is also available in other national cardiac journals<sup>16-17</sup> (box 2), and the Editors' Network now provides a real opportunity to extend these educational initiatives throughout the national cardiology journals of Europe.<sup>10</sup>

**Competing interests:** None declared.

European Society of Cardiology (ESC) National Society cardiovascular journals editors and \*ESC Affiliated Societies cardiovascular journals editors, see Appendix for complete affiliations.

## Box 2 Questionnaire on Education Issues: ESC National Society Cardiovascular Journals

## A. Currently published articles:

- ▶ 84% Journals publish editorials (63% peer-reviewed)
- ▶ 92% Journals publish review articles (83% peer-reviewed)
- ▶ 82% Journals publish supplements (62% peer-reviewed)

## B. Clinical practice guidelines (CPG):

79% Journals publish CPG:

- ▶ 67% national CPG
- ▶ 73% ESC CPG:
  - 50% translated into national languages
  - 36% in English
  - 14% translated into national languages and in English

## C. Continuous medical education (CME)

- ▶ 42% Journals have CME programmes
- ▶ 32% Journals obtain national CME credits
- ▶ 76% Journals would be interested in obtaining ESC CME credits

## D. Interest in additional educative material:

- ▶ 92% Journals interested in ESC joint educative papers
- ▶ 92% Journals interested in "occasional" publication of educative material directly organised by the ESC
- ▶ 71% Journals consider that educative material need not to be distinct/country focused
- ▶ 82% Journals believe that both undergraduate and postgraduate education should be covered

ESC, European Society of Cardiology. A 38 item questionnaire was devised by the Editor's Network Nucleus and sent to ESC national journal editors (44 national societies and 16 affiliated societies). Data were obtained from 38 national journals (33 national societies' journals—75% response rate—and 5 affiliated societies' journals).

This manuscript will be simultaneously published in all ESC National Societies and ESC Affiliated Societies' cardiovascular journals that consented to publication.

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## APPENDIX

**Table A1** Journal names (by alphabetic order of country origin and members (editors-in-chief of the Editors' Network)

<b>National society name</b>	<b>National society journal</b>	<b>Editor-in-chief</b>
Austrian Society of Cardiology	Journal für Kardiologie*	Kurt Huber
Belgian Society of Cardiology	Acta Cardiologica	Hugo Ector Patrizio Lancellotti
Association of Cardiologists of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Medicinski Arhiv	Izet Masic
Croatian Cardiac Society	Kardio List	Mario Ivanusa
Cyprus Society of Cardiology	Cyprus Heart Journal	Loizos Antoniadis
Czech Society of Cardiology	Cor et Vasa	Michael Aschermann
Estonian Society of Cardiology	Seminars in Cardiovascular Medicine†	Alexandras Laucevicius
Finnish Cardiac Society	Sydänääni (Heart Beat)	Pirjo Mustonen
French Society of Cardiology	Archives des maladies du cœur et des vaisseaux Pratique	Jean-Yves Artigou
Hellenic Cardiological Society	Hellenic Journal of Cardiology	Panos Vardas Christodoulos Stefanadis
Italian Federation of Cardiology	Journal of Cardiovascular Medicine Giornale Italiano Di Cardiologia	Massimo Chiarello Leonardo Bolognese
Latvian Society of Cardiology	Seminars in Cardiovascular Medicine†	Alexandras Laucevicius
Lithuanian Society of Cardiology	Seminars in Cardiovascular Medicine†	Alexandras Laucevicius
Netherlands Society of Cardiology	Netherlands Heart Journal	Ernst E van der Wall
Polish Cardiac Society	Kardiologia Polska – Polish Heart Journal	Piotr Kulakowski
Portuguese Society of Cardiology	Revista Portuguesa de Cardiologia	Fausto J Pinto
Romanian Society of Cardiology	Revista Română de Cardiologie	Eduard Apetrei
Russia Fed Society of Cardiology	Cardiovascular Therapy and Prevention Rational Pharmacotherapy in Cardiology	Rafael G Oganov Rafael G.Oganov
Slovak Society of Cardiology	Kardiológia	Gabriel Kamensky
Spanish Society of Cardiology	Revista Española de Cardiología	Fernando Alfonso
Swiss Society of Cardiology	Kardiovaskuläre Medizin Médecine Cardiovasculaire	Thomas F Lüscher René Lerch
Tunisian Society of Cardiology	Cardiologie Tunisienne	Habib Haouala
Turkish Society of Cardiology	Archives of the Turkish Society of Cardiology	Vedat Sansoy
Ukrainian Association of Cardiology	Ukrainian Journal of Cardiology	Valentin Shumakov
British Cardiovascular Society	Heart	Adam Timmis
<b>Affiliated society name</b>	<b>Affiliated society journal</b>	<b>Editor-in-chief</b>
Argentine Society of Cardiology	Revista Argentina de Cardiologia	Carlos Daniel Tajer
Hong Kong College of Cardiology	Journal of the Hong Kong College of Cardiology	Chu-Pak Lau
Mexican Society of Cardiology	Archivos de Cardiología de México	Manlio Márquez
Heart Association of Thailand	Thai Heart Journal	Rungroj Kittayaphong
Venezuelan Society of Cardiology	Avances Cardiológicos	Kaduo Arai

\*Not official national society journal, but major cardiology journal in Austria; †common journal for the Baltic countries.